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SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST: PROSPECTS FOR ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN DIALOGUE;
IRAQ: PRESIDENT BUSH'S SECURITY PLAN; SAO PAULO

1. "End Of A Cycle"

Liberal, largest national circulation daily Folha de S. Paulo (1/31) editorialized: "The Israeli Army's unilateral withdrawal from the Palestinian territories - an idea in which most Israelis placed their hopes for peace - did not work.... The unilateral withdrawal plan conceived by Ariel Sharon ignored the Palestinians. Despite this structural problem, the withdrawal was supported not only by most of the Israeli voters, but also by a significant portion of the international community.... The withdrawal from Gaza helped terrorist group Hamas' victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections and intensified rocket attacks against Israel.... The series of fiascos marks the death of the unilateral proposal and reopens peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. The problem is that there is no leader on any side with sufficient support to sign accords.... Olmert became a weak prime minister who will hardly conclude his term. On the Palestinian side the situation is even worse, given the fact that President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah and Hamas are engaged in a bloody battle for power. It is good that the Israelis have abandoned the illusion that they might have reached peace without negotiating it with the Palestinians."

2. "Bush's Mess"

Workers' Party militant and leftist Catholic Priest Carlos Alberto Libanio Christo (Frei Betto) commented in liberal, largest national circulation daily Folha de S. Paulo (1/31): "The US intervention in Iraq resulted from a series of lies.... With the invasion of Iraq, Bush gave terrorism the status of war, enlarged its recruitment capability and offered its organizations concrete goals and targets. In Iraq, terrorists know where and who to shoot, while the occupation troops aim at imprecise targets and hit civilians.... Bush cannot withdraw the troops from Iraq without admitting a defeat.... In addition to the Pentagon-coordinated war, there is also a civil war that divided the Iraqi national unity. The US can neither support the Sunnis, its historical enemies, nor the Shiites, who are Iran's allies. It cannot even support the Kurds because Turkey would not tolerate that.... Bush, the world's best advised man, confirmed Murphy's Law: 'If everything can be wrong, it certainly will be wrong.' What is more serious is the thirst for revenge that moves him. He does not tolerate the fact that his father failed in the attempt to overthrow Saddam Hussein in 1991, and that his family was associated with Bin Laden's relatives in the oil business."
McMullen